

A
SERMON

Preach'd to the
SOCIETIES
FOR

Reformation of Manners,

IN THE
Cities of *London* and *Westminster,*

AT
SALTERS-HALL,

Aug. 15. 1698.

Preached and Published at the desire of
the said SOCIETIES.

By *VINCENT ALSOP.*

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To the WORTHY
GENTLEMEN

Engag'd in the
SOCIETIES

FOR
Reformation of Manners.

Honoured Sirs !

THE Preaching, Printing, Pub-
lishing this Discourse, is due both
to God, and you : He gave the
Commission, you ministred the Occasion :
A The

The Epistle

The Authority is from Heaven, the Opportunity from your selves. It would therefore be a piece of Impertinent Modesty, and such whose sincerity you might well question, should I frame an excuse for doing that, for which I could have made no excuse had I not done it. What will Justify me, will Vindicate you, for both of us owe a duty to God, and perishing Souls, to pluck them like Brands out of the Fire, upon whom the Wrath of God, and the Malice of Hell, have begun to kindle; if at least our God will honour us, and use us as his Instruments in so Blessed a Work: I know well that they who most need our Help will least accept it; nay, most desperately oppose it: But it's a charitable Severity to bind the hands of the Distracted, though they rage at, and revile us, to prevent if possible their destroying themselves.

I know also that the Persons with whom you deal, will imperiously demand, By what Authority you do these Things, and who gave you this Authority? Now tho' you might retort their Question: By what Authority do you Curse, Swear, Blaspheme, and Prophane the Lord's Day? And who gave you this Authority? Yet seeing the most notorious Crimes committed against the Laws
Di-

Dedicatory.

Divine and Humane, ought to be Punisht in a Legal and Regular Way, however they be, illegal and irregular, you need not insist upon that Answer: Nor yet upon extraordinary examples to justify your ordinary Proceedings; you need not plead the Zeal of Phineas, or Samuel; your Cause and Practise need no such Defences: That Law which Enacts that such an Offence shall be punished with such a Penalty, limiting the Conviction of the Offender to the Deposition of one or more Witnesses is your clear Warrant, and abundant Justification; for if there were no Witnesses, it would be the same as if there were no Laws, no Penalties: And because that which is every Man's Business is no Man's Business, you may honestly agree, that where any shall dare to Transgress, you will dare to impeach the Transgressor: It were a hard Case if Men might associate and combine for Sinning, and none might unite in Societies for Reforming.

I remember a time when the Name of an Informer suffered some disrepute: But it's unjust that you should fall under their Reproach, for a slender understanding is able to distinguish between Praying to God, and Blaspheming Him; between Sanctifying the

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Lords Day and Profaning it ; between setting up the Devils Kingdom, and pulling it down. There is a Text, which having been sometimes abused in the Pulpit, and oft-times exposed by the Press, must not be quoted without some Preface to remove Prejudice, though it stands legible in our Bibles to this day : Tis Judg. 5. 23. Curse ye Meroz, (said the Angel of the Lord) Curse ye bitterly the Inhabitants thereof, because they came not out to help the Lord, to help the Lord against the Mighty. Say not, God needs none of our Help : Tho his Enemies are mighty, yet in their closest Confederacies, and strongest Combinations, they cannot make up one Almighty Enemy, and God can plead his own Cause, and avenge his own Honour upon them without our over-officious assistance : 'Tis true, if we consider his Absolute Power, he needs no Kings, nor Princes, nor inferiour Magistrates to come in as his Auxiliaries ; He can with more ease kill the Murderer, than he could his weaker Brother : choak the Blasphemer with his own Blasphemies, and stifle the Swearer with his own poisonous breath : But he has seen Good to chuse other Methods in which, other Means by which to govern his own World :

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World: As Kings Reign by Him, he governs by them by Legislators and their Laws; Judges and their Sentences, Magistrates and their Executions; in a Word, He governs the Physical World in a Physical way; the Moral World Morally; the Spiritual World Spiritually.

But still you persist, and say: God needs none of our help: No more does Christ need your Relief: And yet God calls for our help, Christ for our Relief: And they both need what they call for; God needs help in his despised Cause: Christ needs Relief in his poor distressed Members: and in these respects none needs help more than God: None Relief more than Christ.

Now as God calls for our help, he does it under a dreadful Curse; and I hope none of us will venture to stand in the Line & Rake of Heavens Artillery: For God sometimes steps out of the ordinary Road, and punishes daring Sinners by the immediate Hand of Heaven, that he may, by some few but notable Instances, convince the World that he has not forsaken it, but regards Mischief, and Spight, with his Eyes, to punish them with his Hand. Thus when Nadab, and Abihu, offer'd strange

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strange Fire to God, which he commanded them not, he consumed them with strange Fire which they expected not : Levit. 10. 2. And when Ananias and Saphira dared to commit Sacrilege, and palliate their Sin with a Lie, Christ struck 'em both dead in a moment, Acts 5.

Gentlemen,

God needs your Help, he bespeaks it, offer your selves willingly to his Call : And yet your Case is much the same with that of the Disciples, Matth. 14. 24. when the Ship (in which they were) was in the mid'st of the Sea, toss'd with the Waves because the Wind was contrary. You see they went to Sea by Christ's commission ; nay, by his compulsion, v. 22. He constrained them to get into a Ship : They were in the clear way of their Duty, and yet they met with a Storm ; and the Winds were not only high, but contrary ; and yet they had some great Encouragements, first, that whilst they were in the Storm at Sea, Christ was Praying in the Mount, v. 23. And then that in the fourth Watch of the Night, Jesus went unto them walking on the Sea : When Night was darkest, the Storm highest,

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est, their Fear greatest, and their Faith weakest, then was the season for Christ's coming: But their greatest trouble was, that Christ came to deliver them walking upon the Sea; which though it might have been their greatest Comfort, that their Lord was above the Waves, and had them under his Feet, yet they cry'd out for fear: Were more afraid of their Deliverer, than of their Danger: So true it is, that God comes sometimes to save us in such uncouth Ways, that we are afraid of his Way and Means more than the Tempest.

But fear not the Devil, though he roars and rages, I would hope his time is but short when he rages most: For thus when Christ came to eject and dispossess him, Mark 9. 20. the evil spirit tare the young Man.

Let me seriously advise you from what point of the Compass you may expect the greatest Danger, and I will conclude.

Your great Danger will arise from those publick Nurseries, and Seminaries of Debauchery: Where Fools make a mock of Sin, and a mock at all Sobriety; who debauch more in one Night than you reform in a Year: You may prune off some few luxuriating branches of Impiety, but till God shall
cut

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cut up the Tree by the roots, they will spring again thicker and stronger : Pull up what you can , these Nurseries will replenish all again : For here that Art and Mystery of Sinning is taught, as if it were a science to be Prophane ; and if the Christian Religion have not power and interest enough to suppress them, they will suppress all Religion : But I must leave the Blasting of these, and the Blessing of you to Him, who loves Righteousness, and hates all Iniquity. I am,

Gentlemen,

Your Faithful Servant

October 31.
1698.

in the Work of the Lord,

V. A.

A
SERMON
 Preached to the
SOCIETIES
 FOR
Reformation of Manners.

Isaiah i. 6. *From the sole of the Foot to the Head there is no soundness in it, but Wounds and Bruises, and putrifying Sores, they have not been closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with Oyntment.*

THESE words describe the dangerous, if not desperate State of *Judah and Jerusalem*: 'Tis true, it was the case of a People some thousands
 B Years

Years ago; but whether it may agree, or how far it may agree to the present state of Things among our selves, I must leave to your serious and impartial Judgments.

The Evils here bewailed, and complained of, had these several Aggravations to render them deplorable, and almost incurable.

1. That they had overspread the whole Body *from the sole of the Foot to the Head*: And thus it is express, *v. 5. The whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart is faint*: Now whether we may from the order of the words infer, that this Corruption began *at the Foot*, amongst the Populacy, and from thence rose up to the nobler parts, *the Heart, and Head*, I shall not determin: Most certain it is, that in the Body Natural, a vitiated Stomach disturbs the Head with Vapours; and that again pours down showers of Rheums upon the Stomach; so the depravations of the inferiours will creep up amongst superiours, and the Vitiuousness of Superiours will probably descend to the Commonalty.

2. There was a Concurrence and Complication of all manner of Evil, *Wounds, Bruises,*

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Bruises, putrifying Sores; which though they be Metaphorical Terms, are yet so easy and natural that they interpret themselves: In a word; Evils political and moral; Sin and Punishment; a People breaking out upon God, and God breaking out upon them; their lifting up their hand against God, and his laying a heavy hand upon them, sore Provocations, and sore Afflictions, are the things which fill up these expressions.

3. That which rendered the case most deplorable, was, that these Wounds were *not closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with Oyntments*, which implies (1.) either that there was no private charitable Hand, that would concern it self; but a poor Nation might bleed to Death, and no good *Samaritan* would do that Office of Love to *bind up its Wounds*, or (2.) that there was no hand of Authority stretched out to apply more potent Remedies, or (3.) that they judged the case was desperate and the wounds incurable; and therefore thought it more advisable, to let the Patient die of its Disease or Wounds, than by its Physician, or Surgeon. Or (4.) whether they presumed

the Kingdom was of a sound Constitution, and would work it self whole in time; or (5.) whether all means that had been used proved ineffectual, the Evil would not obey any Applications, but despised the most potent and proper Remedies; yet so it was, the Wounds were become Ulcers, the Sores putrifying Sores; no Oyntments would mollify them, or no gentle skilful Hand would apply them.

Such was their Case; and it must be confess'd it was a deplorable one, and had been utterly desperate, but for some small hope, yet left upon one account; *v. 9. Except the Lord of Hosts had left us a very little Remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah; like for Sin, and like for Punishment; but God had graciously left a Remnant, a little, a very little Remnant; a praying Remnant that yet solicited Heaven for Remedy when there was none on Earth; a sound sincere and uncorrupted Remnant, that laboured to give some check to the growing Corruptions, and such a Remnant would have saved Sodom,*

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dom, and might yet save Judah and Jerusalem.

The words thus opened, and cleared, afford us this

OBSERVATION.

The case of a People is deplorable and almost desperate, when they are so universally corrupted, and their Corruptions so obstinate that they will not obey the most proper and potent Means of Reformation.

In all Diseases of the Natural Body we account those the most fatal symptoms of Death; when the Distemper defies the most sovereign Remedies; especially when it perverts all Medicines *in materiam, & fomitem morbi*; when Physick becomes the food of the Malady; and the Disease is so strong that it seduces the Remedy to its own faction; to which we may add, when the deluded Patient cannot be perswaded he is Sick, and needs the Advice and help of the Physician: How dangerous then, how desperate is the Case of a Political Body, when Pro-

faneriness grows more Profane by Corruption and Correction; when those Rebukes which should reclaim the Swearer, provoke him to Swear the more; which the Prophet (*v. 5.*) declares to have been the case of Judah, *Why should ye be stricken any more, ye will Revolt more and more?*

This Observation I will endeavour to manage in this Method.

I. I will shew *when the Case of a People may be said to be deplorable, and whence it is that their Corruptions became so incurable.*

II. *What it is that renders the Case of a People so deplorable, when their Corruptions are become incurable.*

III. *What may further be done (if any thing may be done) when a Peoples Corruptions are become, or seem to become incurable? Which will lead us to the Improvement of the whole.*

I. *When the Case of a People may be said to be Deplorable, and whence it is that their Corruptions become so incurable.*

(I.) The

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(1.) The Corruptions of a People become incorrigible incurable by *Inveterate Custom* : When Immoralities by long standing have taken deep root, as a green Wound by neglect grows into an old obstinate Ulcer : *Verecunda sunt scelorum initia* ; the first beginnings of Profaneness are a little modest ; but frequent Practise renders it impudent. As long custom in Sin takes away the sense of it in the Conscience, so it takes away the shame of it before Men. Those Impieties which once sought the Twy-light, nay the Mid-night, in process of time will face the Sun, and defy the Mid-day. That Text *1 Thes. 5. 7. They that are Drunk, are Drunk in the Night*, was calculated for another Meridian than that of *Jerusalem* ; for Men would then dare to be Drunk in the open Day ; of which the Prophet complains, *Isa. 3. 9. The shew of their Countenance doth witness against them, they declare their Sin as Sodom, they hide it not.* And the Prophet *Jeremiab* bewails the same Audaciousness of Sinners, *Jer. 8. 15. Were they ashamed when they had committed Abomination ? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush : Their*

Consciences were Steel'd, and their Faces were Case harden'd ; they had lost all sense of Sin in their own Souls, and all shame of it before the World ; and that Man , that People, which have lost all Shame, are utterly lost as to any hope of Reformation.

Those Sins which at their first appearance would humbly plead for some mitigation of Punishment, when they are Flesh'd, and Flush'd with long usage will insist upon justification of themselves, and their plea is from prescription.

Those Immoralities which might easily have been crush'd in the Egg, when time has hatch'd them, will break out into a Cockatrice : Those sparks which might with ease have been stifled ; by Neglect and Connivance will become a Flame, and defy all our Engins. The first breakings in of the Sea, may be soon stopped, but when it has gotten head, will not be reduced without great Labour, and Charge, if it will be reduced by them.

(2.) The *Universality* of the overspreading Corruption renders the Case yet more deplorable if not desperate. As when the Pestilence first appears, the shutting

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ting up of one infected House, may probably secure thousands, but if it once becomes Epidemical; when it has invaded a whole City, when the Sound are not able to govern the Infected, and perhaps its not known who are Sound, who are Infected, and so a promiscuous Conversation is allowed, or cannot be hindred, the Case is then Hopeless and Desperate.

Now in the Case of universal Degeneracy, if we attempt a Reformation, it must either be by *Advice and Reproof*, or *Punishment*: But 1. *Reproof and Counsel* give us little hope; because the Corrupt Majority will easily scorn the mildest advice, and sharpest Reproof of the Sounder few: Which was the wretched Case of *Sodom*. Gen. 19. 4. *The Men of Sodom compassed the House, both old and young, all the People from every quarter.* Here was a City universally Debauched, all Ages, all Quarters were involved in the common Villany, and when *Lot* ventured to reprove them mildly, alas! too mildly; for his expedient was the same they use at *Rome*, and upon the same ground, who allow or tolerate the
Stews

Stews to prevent a greater Evil. Now observe what success his Counsel had upon these obstinate Wretches, *v. 9. They said stand back; and they said again, this one Fellow came to sojourn, and he will be a Judge; now will we deal worse with thee than with them*: Whence you may easily note, 1. That they thought it a justifiable Plea, that there was but one single Reprover against multitudes of Transgressors: And a single Reformer may as well hope to Stem the Tide with his strength, or to repel the Wind with his own breath, as to shock an universal Deluge of prevailing Abominations. 2. That the Corrupt Majority instead of submitting to the Reproofs of the Minority, will rather punish the Reprovers: *Now will we deal worse with thee than with them.* 3. That the greater Number will defend it self well enough by keeping out of the way of Conviction, for they that have too little Grace to Reform themselves, will have so much wit to keep out of the reach of the Means of Reformation; if they can but keep themselves secure from the Magistrates Warrant being served upon their Persons, they

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they will keep themselves safe from the Warrant of Gods Word ever being served upon their Consciences :

2d. Nor Secondly can we hope for much success where the Wickedness is universal from *legal Punishment*, because the Punishing the diffusive Body, would be next to the depopulating a whole Nation : Sinners defend each other by their Numbers, being closely united in a common Confederacy against God, and their own Souls. They are like the Scales of the *Leviathan*, Job 41. 15, 16. *Whose Scales are his Pride, shut up together as with a close Seal ; one is so near another that no Air can come between them ; they are joined one to another, they stick together that they cannot be sundered : Which was the Observation of the Satyrist :*

Defendit numerus, janctæq; umbone phalanges. Juven.

(3.) That which renders this Universal and Inveterate Prophaneness more incurable, is when its patroniz'd by great
Ex-

Examples ; for as Holy *Bernard* observes, Men will go, *non qua eundum, sed qua itur*, not which way God commands them, but which way their Superiours Examples lead them :

If the *Master* will Swear, the *Servant* thinks he has a good Warrant for his Swearing : If a *Minister* will Drink, his Hearers will be Drunk : If a *Magistrate* will Prophan the Lord's Day, the People will quote his Example, and justify their practice by it ; for they live by Precedent, not Precept.

The scandalous Sins of Superiours carry in them both a strong *Temptation* to, and a plausible *Justification* of those Sins. A strong *Temptation* ; because most Men, whose hearts are not established with Grace, nor possessed with the fear of God, besides the humour of sinful compliance, and accommodating themselves to the Vanities of great Men, do study to insinuate themselves into their favour, in hopes of some notable Advantage by their Obsequiousness. Thus *Haman* when a great Honour was but once mentioned by *Ahasuerus*, Esth. 6. 6. said in his heart, *To whom would the King delight to do honour*

more

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more than to my self? for having wrought himself into the King's affections he concluded that the first Preferment which fell, would certainly drop into his Mouth. And so also it affords a *fair Justification*, Shall I be Wiser than my Teachers? Holier than my Governours? More Precise than my Betters? May I not go as near the brink of the Pit and never fall in, as my Superiours? Shall I be a *Precisian* when the Grandees are *Latitudinarians*? Can I think there can be Poison in that Dish that comes from my Lord's Table? And why should I be stiff, and morose, when he that affrights me from Sin by his Preaching, invites me to it by his Example? Let us never dream that Reformation will make any considerable progress in a degenerate Age, till God shall send us Holy Magistrates, who by their Regular Examples shall invite us to Reform, as well as by the secular Arm, punish those that Transgress. For

1. How is it possible that Person should heartily punish an Offender for that Crime of which his own Conscience accuses him to be guilty, *Rom. 2. 1.* For
when

when he judgeth another he condemneth himself, for doing the same thing.

2. But if the *Law* obliges him to punish an Offender under a severe Penalty to himself, which he would not willingly incur, and yet he cannot fairly avoid: His partiality will teach him to invent a thousand Evasions, either by brow-beating the Witness, or finding some flaw in the Evidence, or some creep-hole in the *Law*, so that all endeavours for *Reformation* shall be defeated, and made ineffectual.

(4.) That which renders *Debauchery* incorrigible, is to Punish it, *meerly as a violation of a Human Law.*

The Authority of God is infinitely greater than that of any Human *Legislator*, and so does His Threatnings carry a greater Terror, and strikes a greater Awe upon the Conscience: If therefore we wave the Divine Authority in the *Preceptive part*, and conceal the Divine Sanction in the *Commminatory part*, the Offender has no more to contend with than the Authority of Man, and what Punishments he can devise and inflict.

The

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The great end of Human Laws for *Reformation of Offences against the Moral Law*, is to apply the Law of God, and set it home by Punishment upon the Conscience.

Suppose we would lay the Penalty of the Law upon one that profaneth the Lord's Day, in the mean time denying the *Morality of the fourth Commandment*, what a slender Business should we make of it? He that denys the *Jus Divinum*, does in effect repeal the *Jus Humanum* too, for thus the Transgressor argues: If I can either escape the Temporal Penalty by secrecy; or satisfy the Law by a poor Mulct, I need not tremble at the future Judgment, or that I shall stand befor the Tribunal of God for the breach of a Law, which is not immediately his own.

The Apostle therefore in that great Question about *Subjection to the higher Powers*, charges it upon the Souls of Men, *Rom. 13. 5. Ye must needs be subject not only for Wrath, but for Conscience sake*: That is, you are under an Obligation to obey not only on the account of what Man can threaten or inflict

inflict, but out of Conscience of the Authority which God has over you, and that dreadful Penalty which he can lay upon you.

And thus in a few particulars I have shewed whence it is that National Corruptions become so incorrigible, 1. From Inveterate Customs. 2. Universality of the Contagion. 3. The Patronage of great Examples. 4. That Humane Laws are not seconded and back'd by the Law of God.

II. What is it that renders the Case of a People so deplorable when their Corruptions are become incurable?

(1.) It looks very black upon a People when Profaneness grows very incorrigible, and scorns to obey the proper Remedies, because God will soon be weary of using further means to Reform them, and leave them to their own crooked and perverse inclinations.

'Tis the saddest Threatnings when God will threaten no more: the sorest Punishment, when God will Punish no more: And though the Debauched World could

All

be content, that he would spare both, and let 'em alone, they will soon find it had been their true Interest to have continued under his Discipline, and reclaiming Methods than to have been left to themselves, and their own foolish ways.

Let us consult that terrible Word: *Hosea 4. 1, 2, 3, 4. The Lord hath a Controversy with the Inhabitants of the Land, because there is no Truth, nor Mercy, nor Knowledge of God in the Land, By Swearing, and Lying, and Killing, and Stealing, they break out, and Blood toucheth Blood; therefore shall the Land mourn, &c.* This is terrible, but the most terrible Judgment is that of the 17th v. *Ephraim is joined to Idols, let him alone.* 'Tis as if a Chirurgeon when he sees an inveterate Ulcer become obstinate, and will submit to no Remedies, should say, What my Art could promise or perform is done, but I see my skill is baffled, my patience wearied, my hope defeated, and the gangrened part must be cut off, or the Patient perish.

Whilst God will practise upon a People, there's some hope of a Blessed Issue at last

last :—But if once he throws up his Care, we may throw up the hopes of a Cure ; & God is pleased sometimes to express himself, as if he despair'd of effecting a thoro' Cure, *Isa. 1. 5. Why should you be smitten any more, ye will revolt more and more ?* All my Blows are but like those upon the Anvil, which make it still harder : And this was the desperate Case of Israel, *Pf. 81. 11, 12. My People would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts Lusts, and they walked in their own Counsels.* How dreadful then is the Case of a People when God shall cease to inflict Temporal Judgments, and leave them to their own Hearts Lusts and Ways, which is the greatest of Spiritual Judgments, and the fore-runner of Eternal Judgments.

(2.) The Case is Deplorable when God's own Servants, whom He employs as his Instruments to Reform the Degenerate Age, shall meet with those Discouragements, that they are ready to throw it up as desperate.

And.

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And to this pass have the Prophets been reduced, Jer. 20. 8. *I cried out Violence and Spoil, because the Word of the Lord was made a Reproach to me, and a Derision daily. Then I said : I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His Name.* When the Word of the Lord, the Preaching of it, and the Preachers of it shall become a Derision ; when Sinners are got into the Chair of the Scornful, they can rise no higher : And when the Ministers of that Word shall resent this Treatment so tenderly that they resolve to Preach no more, and their Faith can sink no lower, what must the end of these Things be ?

I would willingly look upon it as a Token for Good from God, that he has raised up such Instruments, who out of Zeal to his Interest, have laid out themselves with unwearied Diligence to reduce the Prophane to some tolerable Consistency with the Profession of the Christian Religion, but if we should see them despond, their hearts faint and fail within them, because little or no success answers their pious endea-

vours, and to hear them cry out, Lord what wouldst thou have us further to do? For Ps. 11. 3: *If the foundations be destroyed, what can the Righteous do?* Why surely no more than good Jehoshaphat, 2 Chro. 20. 12. *We know not what to do, but our Eyes are towards thee*: Either to tell us what thou wouldst have us do, or because we can do nothing more, to take thy Work out of our Hands into thy own and do it, who only canst do it effectually thy self.

The Servants of Christ are sometimes reduced to that extremity to which the Mariners were, *Acts 27. 15. When the Ship was caught, and could no longer bear up into the Wind, we let her drive*: We may conceive the Master of the Vessel speaking to his Passengers thus, Friends, I had hoped to have weathered this Storm, but I can do no more, and must now commit our selves and the Vessel, to the merciless Mercy of the Winds, and Waves, and let her run a Drift! Such is the Language of some of Christ's faithful Servants in the Work of Reformation; Holy Lord, thou

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thou hast sent us forth upon thy Work :
No sooner were we Lanced out into
the Deep, but a sore Tempest fell up-
on us : We have laboured against the
Wind with what Skill and Resoluti-
on thou gavest us : But we are over-
set, and now commit the Church, that
Vessel, in which all thy concerns in
this World are ventured, to thy own
Conduct : Yet will we not utterly give
out, but *in hope labour against hope*, leav-
ing the issue of all to thy Holy Will,
and Wisdom : The Vessels are thine,
thy Concerns are in it, it cannot to-
tally be Ship-wreck'd ; howsoever we
will not use the expedient of the Cock-
Boat, *Except we abide in the Ship we
cannot be saved.*

(3.) And it speaks the Case more
Hazardous, and as to Humane Reason
desperate, when the wise God has run
through a Course of Means to Reform
a Nation, and yet the symptoms are as
Threatning as ever, so that God is
pleased to speak as if he were at a loss
what further to do for their Refor-
mation. Hof. 6. 4. *O Ephraim, what
shall*

shall I do to thee? O Judah, what shall I do to thee? I have proved thee with Mercies, I have tryed thee with Judgments, with War and Peace, with Plenty, with Scarcity. When I indulged thee abundance of Corn, and Wine, and Oil: It was perverted into Luxury, Riot, Wantonness: When I humbled thee with a little Scarcity, nothing was heard but Repining and Murmuring: When I let loose upon thee a dreadful War, thou wouldst not make Peace with thy God. When I restored Peace, thou still maintained a War with Heaven: The Drunkard would be a Drunkard still, both in Peace and War: The Swearer would Swear still whether in a Storm or a Calm: Though God changed his Providences, they were uniform in their Provocations, so that it came at last to a Trial, whether Mercy and Judgment, or Sin and Profaneness should have the Victory: *Lev. 26. 23.* we read there of a People that walked *contrary to God* in all his Ways: and as they thwarted him in all his, He crossed them in all theirs: and it came

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at last to this push: If they would act *Seven times more contrary to him*, he would try if he could not yet act *Seven times more contrary to them*: And certainly the Case must be deplorable when the Question shall be, Whether Sinners can be more potent in Sinning, or God in Punishing? *1 Cor. 10. 22. Do we provoke the Lord to Jealousie, are we stronger than he?* It was excellent Counsel that Solomon has given, *Eccles. 6. 10. That none should be so Fool-hardy as to contend with one more mighty than himself*: And our B. Saviour, *Luke 14. 31. 32.* lays it down for an infallible Maxime: That when a King goes forth to make War against another, he should *first sit down, and consult whether he be able to meet him with Ten Thousand that comes against him with Twenty Thousand*: It deserves the consideration of all Sinners to advise well with themselves, Whether Ten Thousand Sins will be able to stand against Twenty Thousand Judgments; and whether it be not more advisable, whilst God is yet *as far off*, to beg Conditions of Peace, to send God a Blank

that he may prescribe his own Terms? for how will the Chaff contend with the Whirlwind, or the dryed Stubble with the consuming Fire?

(4.) The Case of a People is deplorable: when Profaneness is incorrigible, and *Religion toward God fails*, because all Faithfulness towards Man fails also: If Conscience towards God ceases, Confidence among Men will expire: For Religion is the Foundation of all secure Converse, all Safe-dealing in the World. Him whom the Bonds of Divine Fear will not hold, nor Covenants, nor Contracts with his Neighbour, will hold; He that breaks with God, breaks with all the World.

Suppose we that a Man makes no Conscience of *taking Gods Name in vain*, but by Swearing, Vain-Swearing, False-Swearing, profanes that Holy Name of his God, shall any one persuade me to believe that he makes a scruple of Murder, Adultery, Stealing, bearing False Witness; can I be so vain as to think he will be true to his Neighbour that is false to his Creator?

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tor? The Prophet, *Hos. 4. 2.* gives this as the Reason why there was *no Truth in the Land*, because there was *no Knowledge of God in the Land*.

This Doctrine *Abraham* was not afraid to justify to the King of *Gerar's* face, *Gen. 20. 11.* *I thought surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they will kill me.* And his thought was reasonable, that where there was no awe of God upon the Conscience, such Profligates would boggle at nothing.

We may easily admit, that some *extrin-sick obligation* may hold a Man, where the fear of God has no hold upon his heart: He may perhaps accept a Bill drawn upon him by consulting with his Reputation: Perhaps a double Bond may advise him to make payment of the Debt, because he dreads the Forfeiture: Yet could he be assur'd the Bond were lost or burnt, or the Witnesses dead, you should soon see that no Religion bound him, and he would put the Creditor upon the proof of the Specialty; and, if he can evade the Law of Man, he will easily give himself a Discharge in the Court of Conscience. The Psalmist crys out as in a
desperate

desperate Case, Psal. 12. 1. *Help, Lord, for the Godly Man ceaseth, the Faithful fail from among the Children of Men:* Where Godliness, and the godly Man cease, Faithfulness and Faithful Men will fail; that is, where the Duties of the First Table are not regarded, there will be as little respect to those of the Second.

Psal. 14. 1. *The Fool hath said in his heart, there is no God:* And the next tidings you hear of our Atheist is, *They are Corrupt, they have done abominable Works; there is none that doth good, no not one.* If once this flood-gate be pluckt up to let Atheism in, Principle, and Practice; a deluge of all Treachery and Falshood breaks in with it: And as we may argue from the cause to the effect: If that unjust Judge fears not God, he regards not Man, Luke 18. 2. So may we from the effect to the cause, where there is no faithfulness to Man, there is no fear of God, Ps. 36. 1. *The transgression of the Wicked saith within my heart, There is no fear of God before his eyes.*

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(5.) I add one account more: It's a deplorable Case when Profaneness is grown incorrigible, because God *seems angry with his own Instruments of Reformation.*

It frowns most sadly upon a People that God should send his Servants about his own Work, and yet not be with them in their Work; and they are ready to argue: Surely we have done the Lord's Work negligently, because we have done it so unsuccessfully. If the Lord did send us, why is he not powerfully with us? If he be not with us, why did he send us?

God's Dealings with his Servants in the Success and Reward of their Service is very mysterious, and that on these accounts:

1. God is angry with his Servants when they refuse to go when he calls, and sends them; and yet sometimes he seems angry too, though they do go at his call and sending: If at least we may judge him angry by Interpretation and Construction, when he succeeds them not in the thing he sends them about.

Exod.

Exod. 4. God calls, and sends *Moses* to bring *Israel* out of *Ægypt*: *Moses*, whether from a sense of his own unmeetness for the Work, or apprehension of the Danger of the Service, makes many excuses; one while he pleads his own Insufficiency, another time that there was some other Person better qualified for the Work: And though God refutes all his Objections, yet still he is loath to engage, till *v. 14.* *the anger of the Lord was kindled against him*: Well! At last he Addresses himself courageously to the Service, and yet *v. 24.* *It came to pass, by the way in the Inn, the Lord met him, and sought to kill him.* Mysterious Providence! The Lord is angry when his Servant would not go, and God is more angry when he goes. But let us know that God will have his own work done in his own way. *Moses* is sent upon an Errand of Reforming others, but *Moses* must first Reform his own Family. Could he be a meet Person to bring *Israel* into Covenant, when his own Children were out of Covenant? Let it give a serious Caution to all of us: *The Lord will be sanctified in all that draw nigh unto him,*
Levit.

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Levit. 10. 3. And if he be not sanctified in our hearts, he will be glorified upon the Heads.

2. It's a myſterious Providence that God ſhould reward his Servants for their work, when he denys them ſucceſs in it.

Iſa. 49. 4. Then I ſaid I have laboured in vain, and ſpent my ſtrength for nought, and in vain, yet ſurely my judgment is with the Lord, and my Work with my God. Here are two things that may bear up the Spirit of God's Servants in undertaking and proſecuting his Work, whatever the ſucceſs be.

1. *Their Judgment is with the Lord.* Man ſhall not be their Judge, and their God will judge them, not by the ſucceſs of their Labours, but the integrity of their hearts in undertaking, and proſecuting it.

2. *Their Work is with their God.* That Labour of Love, That Work of Faith, wherein they have laid out themſelves is with God, it lies before him, is laid up with

with him ; it shall not be lost ; its gone before them to the Throne ; it shall follow after them to Judgment ; it shall meet them in the day of recompence. And this is their great encouragement to be *stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, knowing that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord,* 1 Cor. 15. 58.

III. I am now come to the Third and last Inquiry, *What may be further done* (if any thing may yet be done) *when inveterate Corruptions, universal Degeneracy seems to have made the Evils incurable ;* And this has brought me to

The APPLICATION.

Brethren !

I address my self to you, whom our gracious God, in Mercy to a Sinful Nation, has raised up, and distinguisht by a Spirit of Holy Zeal to appear against, and give some check to the daring Spirit of
Pro-

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Profaneness which has over-spread the Land ; *Iniquity is come in like a flood, and God has lifted up a Standard against it,* Isa. 59. 19.

We see you labouring against great oppositions, and under great discouragements from those Oppositions, and you may justly complain with the Prophet : Jer. 6. 28, 29. *They are grievous Revolters, walking with Slaunders, they are Brass and Iron, they are all corrupters, the Bellows are burnt, the Lead is consumed of the Fire, the Founder melteth in vain, for the Wicked are not plucked a way.*

Now as I pray that God would strengthen your hearts, so I will endeavour to strengthen your hands, and for this great end do exhort you.

1. To look inwards to your own Hearts.

2. To look up towards your Faithful God.

3. To look outwards to your Discouragements.

4. To look upwards again to the Divine Encouragements.

I. Let

I. Let me intreat you to *look into your own hearts*, and when you have narrowly made a Scrutiny there, and found all right within, or set that right which was wrong, you may more comfortably look upwards to your God, and more courageously outwards upon all the Oppositions and Discouragements, you shall meet with in your Blessed Work, from this wretched World.

§. 1. *Look inwards* narrowly, search your Hearts severely, whether they be right with God, and for God; that is, whether the Honour of God be the great commanding end which governs you in this great Undertaking? VVhether this be the main Spring, the first wheel that gives motion to all your Actions: Tho' a good end will not justify an evil Actions, yet an evil End will pollute and spoil a good one.

The best Heart, like the best VVatch, has need to be often set right, and besure you set 'em both right by the Sun, and not by the example of other Mens Dials. And tho' I hope you did once set them true when you entered upon this good Work,
yet

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yet examine them whether they have not gone wrong in the prosecution of it.

The heart of Man is an intricate Labyrinth, and without the Clew of Divine Directions, we may easily lose our selves, lose our way, lose our God, and the works that we have wrought in the many windings, and turnings, the secret recesses that are in it. When therefore you have searched your selves, while you are searching, and before you search, lift up *David's Prayer*, Ps. 139. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, know my thoughts, and see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the Way that is everlasting.*

§. 2. Look again inwards, and examine your selves strictly, whether in subordination to the glory of God, you desire, design, and pursue in this good Work the Prosperity and flourishing Estate of your Native Country?

It was the glory of *Nehemiah*, though it was to the Regret of his malignant Enemies; That there was a man come, a man to seek the Welfare of the Children of Israel, Nehem. 2. 10. Do you proceed
D upon

upon this generous Principle ! Knowing that *Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a shame to any People*, Prov. 14.

34.

Righteousness infuses Courage and Gallantry into a People ; but Debauchery makes 'em Cowards, Effeminates, Enervates, Dispirits them : A good Conscience is the best shield for a great Confidence. • Prov. 24. 1. *The Wicked flee when none pursueth ; but the Righteous are bold as a lion* : And though the Spirit of Wine may inspire some Men with a huffing, hectoring, a blaspheming Valour, yet these Debauchers, that dare God to his face, will turn their backs upon an armed Man : Holiness renders a People truly Honourable ; but Profaneness stains and tarnishes all their Glory, renders them despicable in the eyes of judicious Persons, Deut. 4. 7. *What People is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them in all things that we call upon him for* : Holiness makes a Nation wise, for *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, a good understanding have all they that do his Commandments*, Ps. 111. 10. But Wickedness makes it little, foolish, silly, and ridicu-

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ridiculous, and to make no Figure in the World. There is nothing a Nation should be more ambitious of, than to outwit their subtle Enemies, to countermine all their Politicks, and it is Holiness that infuses this holy Policy, 119. 98. *Thro thy Commandments thou hast made me Wiser than my Enemies.*

Let this Ambition therefore fill your Sails to recover the Glory of a Nation, which Wickedness has eclipsed: To restore the Valour of the Nation, which Profaneness has baffled, by the vigorous Suppressing that which is the Reproach of any People.

§. 3. Examine your selves further in this your Work. Have you cordially espoused the Interest of Christ in opposition to that of the wicked one, and the wicked World?

There are two great Interests which divide the World: That of Christ and Holiness, that of the Devil and Profaneness. These two have been contending from the beginning, and whatever the specious pretences have been, all the Wars, all the Contentions that have been

managed ever since, were nothing but the Bickerings and Skirmishes of that old enmity put between the two Seeds, Gen. 3. 15.

These Interests can never be reconcil'd, *Christ* glories in the Title of a *Saviour*, and the *Devil* in that of a *Murderer and Destroyer*: The Enmity of Satan is founded in this; he hates Holiness, he envys the happiness of Immortal Souls, he therefore hates *Christ* whose design it is to save those Souls, and to deliver them out of his paws. The Enemy understands thoroughly his true Interest, and can never be mistaken in it: Namely, to draw over to his Interest poor deluded Souls, wherein, tho' he cannot hope to mitigate his own Torments by the multitudes of those he draws to Hell with him, yet he takes some pleasure in the Revenge he supposes to have got upon *Christ*, by robbing him of the Glory of Saving Sinners. Wonder not then that he is so unwearied in going up and down seeking whom he may Seduce, for those whom he seduces he devours.

His

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His Interest therefore lies in the wicked World, and in the wickedness of the World. For *the whole World lies in Wickedness*, *ἡ τὰ πάντα καὶ τὰς*, which may be render'd, *The whole World lies in the Devil* : Or the whole World as degenerated and gone off from God, has espoused the interest of the wicked One.

Set therefore your hearts true and right in this particular, to suppress that of the Devil, and to Advance the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and let not your Zeal transport you against Men, but against Sin ; not against their Persons, but their Wickedness, the wickedness of the VWorld, and that wicked One.

§. 4. Look once more into your Hearts ; and examine whether that Reformation which you would carry on abroad, be begun, and proportionably carry'd on in your own Hearts, and Houses : That so you may give a good example of that Reformation, to which you would draw others.

Assure your selves you will never be able to look the Magistrate in the face, before whom you shall appear; nor the Offender in the face when he stands as a Delinquent before the Magistrate; nor Conscience in the face when you shall view your selves in that glass; nor God, in the face before whom you must give an account of what you have done for him, as well as what you have done against him, if it may be Retorted upon you. *Physician heal thy self*, before thou pretendest to heal others: Look therefore into your own hearts, into your own Conversations: Look into your Families, to your Children and Servants, begin your Reformation at home, and let *David's Rule and Resolution* be yours: *Psal. 101. 2. I will behave my self Wisely in a perfect Way, I will walk in the midst of my House with a perfect Heart.* Read that whole Psalm, and it will fully convince you, that the Psalmist was not only a Reforming King over Reformed Subjects: But a Reforming Master of a Reformed Family.

II. Let me now encourage you to *look upwards*: which you may now comfortably

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tably and confidently do, when you have faithfully and impartially inspected your own hearts : And

§. 1. VVhen you look up to God on high, lie very low, and be humbled that God has sent you about so excellent a VVork, his own VVork, and yet crown'd your Endeavours with so slender Success : *The Wicked will still do wickedly* : It is an amazing Dispensation that he should so little prosper a VVork so good in it self, of so great Concern to his own glory, and wherein the Interest of our Lord Jesus does so eminently lie : But yet I admire more that Divine Grace which has spirited you with so generous a Principle, so noble Zeal that you could go out, and still go on in the meer conscience of your duty towards God, expecting your Recompence from him alone, whatever the success shall be.

§. 2. Look up again to him, and bless his Name that he has honoured you in calling you to this Service, fitting you in some good measure for it, and given some success in it : You will say, Alas ! it is but little : Account it so, and God will have you account it little till you have re-

formed the whole Nation, till all Impiety shall hide its face, and stop its mouth: But however little the success of your Pious Endeavours shall be, it has this great Thing in it, That God graciously accepts and approves of your VVork, and has put his Seal to it: Thus Christ owned the Service of her, *Mar. 14. 6. Let her alone! why trouble ye the Woman, she has done what she could.* This was the excellent temper of that holy Mans Spirit, *Ezra 9. 6, 8. O my God I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee my God, for our iniquities are increased over our Heads, and our Trespasse is gone up to the Heavens; yet now for a little space Grace has been shewed us from the Lord our God, to have a Remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his Holy Place, that our God may lighten our eyes.*

Keep it therefore settled upon your hearts, that God's Gleanings are better than the Devil's Vintage; God's first Fruits, than his Harvest, and Christ's small Remnant more precious than his vast multitudes.

S. 3. Lift up your eyes, your hands, your voice, your hearts to God in the
Heavens

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Heavens, in most fervent believing Prayer; and give me leave to recommend these few Things as proper materials to fill up your Prayer.

1. Pray earnestly that God would strengthen your Hearts and Hands against all discouragements you may meet with in this difficult Service: You shall find God more able to encourage, than the rage of Men & Devils is to discourage you: if he will be with you, & for you, no matter who is against you. *David* argu'd thus, *Psf. 41. 11. By this I know that thou favour'st me, because my enemy doth not triumph over me.* Either your Enemies shall not fight against you, or if they will fight not conquer; or if they conquer, not triumph, or if they seem to triumph, their triumph shall be short. He that would overcome the Devil must first prevail with God: which was Holy *Jacob's* method, *Gen. 32. 28c* who first prevail'd with the *Angel*, and then easily persuaded *Esau*:

2. Pray again, and pray earnestly that God would put a Spirit of Zeal into the hearts of all those into whose hands he has put Power and Authority. *David's* complaint will suit your case, *2 Sam.*

3. 39. *I am this day weak, and these Men, the Sons of Zerviah, are too hard for me.* You have the Law of God, the Laws of Man for you, and yet the Enemies of both, these Cursing, Swearing, Sabbath-breaking Wretches, are in many instances too hard for you: But when it shall once please the Lord to stir up the Magistrates more generally, and heartily to assist and abet you, your work will be more easy.

It is a serious Question, and not rashly to be determin'd, Whether the Corruptions and Profanenesses, which abound at this day, may be justly call'd *National Sins*? Of which I would give my Opinion without any positive or peremptory Determination.

1. It is too evident to be denied, or excus'd, that there is a general declining of the Power of practical Religion; and an increase of Sin in one kind or other, amongst all sorts of Men.

2. That it is thankfully owned that our Legislators, by their good Laws against the most prevailing Abominations, have acquitted themselves of the guilt of these Corruptions: All that the Lawgivers can do, as they are such, and further they

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they cannot go, than to appoint proportionable Penalties for these Crimes, and to enjoin the Magistrates respectively to put those Laws in due execution : So that we must acknowledge they have *approved themselves clear in this matter.*

3. His Majesty, by many and strict Proclamations, has charg'd the Magistrates to execute the Laws with effect, and to proceed vigorously therein, so that the Guilt will not lie there.

4. God has raised up a considerable number of faithful Magistrates, who have appeared freely in this Service : Upon whom God will we hope put some distinguishing mark of Honour as the Reward of their Zeal : For such as *Honour God will he honour, but they that despise him, shall be lightly esteemed.*

5. You that have engaged in these hopeful Societies for Reformation, have contributed to prevent these Immoralities which are too much National by their extent from becoming National by Guilt and Condemnation ; not only by willingly offering your selves as Assistants to the Magistrate ; not only by crying to God mightly to stir up Men fearing God,
Men

Men of Courage to help you, but by bearing your open Testimonies against those Enormities which you are not able to Suppress, or Redress.

3. Pray without ceasing, that God would pour out of his Spirit upon all Ministers of his Word and Sacraments, that by their unwearied Labours the consciences of the Profane may be strongly touched, and they brought to a sound and saving Repentence: And I must say that in Praying for them, you Pray for your selves.

This would supersede much of your great trouble, and give you a Writ of Ease from the fatigues of your difficult Province, & I question not but you would rejoyce to see convinced Sinners converted, rather than to have the stubborn punished: *There is joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth*, and the rejoycing of Holy Ones on Earth would echo to theirs above, when the natures of such are changed, more than their hands are restrained, and chained up by Penal Laws.

III. I shall not need to advise you to look outwards to that Treatment you are
to

to expect from those Flagitious Ones, whose Crimes call for your most severe *Animadversion*. I hope you have fate down and reckon'd it up with your selves what it might cost you before you enter'd upon, and engaged in this Work, yet I will present you with a Bill of Fare of the Entertainment which I believe you have found, and may further expect.

§. I. You will meet with a generation of Men, who tho' they have been emptied from Vessel to Vessel, are yet settled upon their Lees. A sort of Sinners represented to the Prophet in a Vision, Ez. 24. 6. By a Pot which had long been on the Fire, yet the scum remained in it: Of whom another Prophet speaks as a generation of intractable and incorrigible Sinners, Jer. 6. 28. *They are all grievous Revolters, walking with Staunders, they are Brass and Iron, they are all Corrupters*: Now of these he tells us how little could be hoped, v. 29. *The Founder melteth in vain*: Let him make never so strong a blast, the Bellows shall sooner be burnt than their flinty hearts be made fusile: Nay that they will sooner be consumed themselves, than their scorious parts separated

rated from them: *The Lead is consumed of the Fire.*

The Prophet *Isaiah*, ch. 48. v. 4. acquaints you in what part the inflexible Iron, and the incorrigible Brass doth lie: *I know that thou art obstinate; thy Neck is an Iron Sinew, and thy Brow Brass.* Now what success can you hope for when you must practise upon such as these? Would you put the Yoke of Divine and Humane Laws upon them? *Their Neck is an Iron Sinew!* The Sons of *Belial* will never bend, or stoop to any Yoak; Or do you fancy you may shame them out of their scandalous Habits? No, *their Brow is Brass.* Upon these your Arguments and Reasonings are all lost, and your more Rigid Methods thrown away.

§. 2. Though your *Work* is your *Honour*, yet expect to be Reproached for it. You shall be censured that it's a pragmatical Humour that engages you, popular applause that fills your Sails; you would make a Figure, be some great thing in the World. 'Tis your comfort that they who usurp a Judgment over you in their Day, shall not be your Judges in the great Day, 1 Cor. 4, 5. *It's a very small thing*

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thing that I should be judged of you, or of Mans Judgment --- He that judgeth me is the Lord. And in this hard case I know not what you can obtend, but the Shield of your own Integrity, 2 Cor. 1. 12. Our Rejoicing is this, The Testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our Conversation in the World.

3. Expect to be ridicul'd by those who would pass for the Witts of the present Age: Jesus Christ has not a more pernicious Enemy than unsanctified Wit: Now this sort of Men will dart many a sharp pointed Scoff at your Proceedings, and the Success of them: Which may pierce as deep in some ingenious Breasts as the ruder Blows of opprobrious Language: This went as near the Spirit of Holy Job, and provoked his patience equally with more rustical Entertainment, Job 17. 2. *Are there not mockers with me, and doth not mine eye continue in their Provocation?* Especially this affects the innocent Soul, when scorn is mixed with a malicious Indignation, Psal. 35. 16. *With hypocritical Mockers in Feasts they gnashed upon me with their Teeth.* And
when

when *Nehemiah* came to Reform Matters at *Jerusalem*, he could not escape the virulent insults of *Tobiah*, and *Sabbathai*, *Nehem.* 4. 2, 3, 4. *What will these feeble Jews do? Will they make an end in one day? Even that which they build, if a Fox go up, he shall even break down their stone Wall.* Poor Reformers! What a stir do you make about your fanatick Models? The edge of the Laws will soon be turned, and your own Zeal quickly cooled, and then when the restraint of these Laws shall be a little relaxed, you will see all things run in their Old Channels, and Nature for a while curbed, will return with more eagerness to its own Inclinations; To all these, and a thousand more of these Scoffs, you have nothing better to return than what they then did, *v.* 4. *Hear O God, for we are despised, and turn their Reproach upon their own heads.*

§. 4. And may you not reasonably apprehend a Spirit of bitter and bloody Revenge already boiling in the hearts of those whom the Laws have met withal in their Exorbitancies? Some Sparks of that temper even now breaks out at the mouth of the Furnace, from whence you
may

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may easily conjecture at the desperate Heat that burns within: Do they not watch for your Haltings? And more narrowly observe when you trip in any punctilio of the Law, than you do when they scandalously fall, and lye wallowing in the Mire? Assure your selves, if you Record their Convictions, they Register all the Errors of your Prosecutions, and only wait for a happy day, and welcome juncture, when they may wreck their Malice upon you: You have great need therefore, with the Psalmist, to pray, (Ps. 5. 8.) *Lord make thy waies straight before me, because of my Observers.*

§. 5. Nor is it a little part of your Discouragement, that upon the matter you stand alone in this Work: Which was the sad Case of David, Ps. 94. 16. *Who will rise up with me against the Wicked; who will stand up for me against the Workers of Iniquity?* But be not afraid with any Amazement, you are not alone, for God is with you.

In a word: All the Dissolute and Flagitious are your declared Enemies: The indifferent Gallio's, the Neuters in Religion, cannot be numbred amongst your
E Friends:

Friends : Whether you stand or fall, sink or swim, they are wholly unconcern'd : The Men of Politick Principles, know not yet whether they are for you, or against you, the issue determines their Judgments ; like those wary prudent Ones, (*Esther* 3. 4.) who waited to see how Mordecai's matters would stand : The cooler sort of Professors are rather, of the two, for you than against you, only the Sincere of all Persuasions and Denominations wish you good success in the Name of the Lord, and God himself, who is more than all that are for you, or against you, will be with you, and Bless you, and make you a Blessing.

IV. Give me so much more of your Patience, whilst I set before you the Encouragements of God, against all these Discouragements, and I will conclude.

1. Let God's Call and Commission for your Work, afford you sufficient Courage and Confidence against all the Discouragements of the Work : It's a notable evidence of Sincerity, when we go on in the way of our Duty, upon the security of God's Authority, whatever Difficulties we meet with in the way, or
how

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how little appearance of Success there may be in the end : Ezek. 2. 6. *Be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though Briers and Thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among Scorpions; be not afraid of their words, nor be not dismay'd at their looks, though they be a rebellious House.*

2. When your Fears begin to rise in your Hearts, act your Faith upon God : Fear arises from the sense of your own Weakness, and the apprehension of your Enemies Power : But Faith knows how to set the Strength of God against your own Weakness, and the Strength of Enemies : Ps. 56. 3. *What time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee.*

3. Let tender Compassion to Souls, that are destroying themselves, whet your Zeal, if at any time the edge begins to turn ; it would move Pity in the Heart of any one to see how contemptuously the Devil insults over those Souls he has got into his own power : 2 Tim. 2. 26. *They are taken Captive by him at his will : As if he would adorn his Victory by dragging them behind his Triumphant Chariot : Mark 9. 22. He casts them into*

the Fire, and into the Water, as if he would make sport with immortal Souls. Let this lamentable sight engage all your Zeal to rescue them: Jude 21. Others save with fear, pulling them out of the Fire.

4. Let the glorifying of God and your Redeemer be enough to influence you to the highest Endeavours to promote it: You cannot sacrifice your All to a more agreeable Object: Phil. 1. 20. *As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my Body, whether it be by Life, or by Death.*

5. If you take the Counsels of God's Word, you shall certainly have its Comforts: Let the Precepts Guide you, and the Promises shall Support you. Ps. 119.

24. *Thy Testimonies are my Delight and my Counsellors.*

6. A good Conscience, and its Testimony, will be responsible for all the Evil you may incur, all the Good you may hazard or lose for the asserting it: This was the Apostles Practice of Piety, Acts 24. 16. *Herein do I exercise my self always, to keep a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Men.*

7. Lastly.

Reformation of Manners. 53

7. Lastly. The Cause of God, the Interest of Christ makes up a powerful Motive to the most difficult Duties, and a sufficient Security against the strongest Temptations. Go on therefore, Brethren, as you have begun, in no wise terrified by your Adversaries, and the God of all Grace and Peace shall be with you. *To whom be the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever. Amen.*

FINIS.

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